

Texas Master Naturalists ROLLING PLAINS CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 6, No. 9

<http://txmn.org/rollingplains>

September 2014

Texas Master Naturalist 15th Annual Meeting and Advanced Training October 24-26, 2014

Join us for the Texas Master Naturalist 15th Annual Meeting & Advanced Training this year! It will be hosted at the Mo Ranch in scenic Hunt, Texas on October 24th through 26th.

Registration for this highly anticipated event is NOW available through the Annual Meeting page on the Texas Master Naturalist State website at <http://txmn.org/>



Additional information about the weekend, registration details, the events agenda and costs can be found on the Registration page.

Volunteer Opportunity

Lake Arrowhead State Park has a booth set up for the Texas Oklahoma Fair September 16 through the 20th. We have been invited to help them out. This would be an opportunity to promote the park and bring attention to the master naturalist chapter. Cost to attend is \$7.00

For those of you that still need volunteer hours this could help you certify. Friday and Saturday will be the busiest days.

Hours are: Tues., Sept. 16 through Friday, Sept. 19 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.
and Saturday, Sept. 20 from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you would like to help out, as I need to notify Keith at Lake Arrowhead State Park.

LOCALS

SEPTEMBER 2: Rolling Plains Chapter monthly meeting is at River Bend Nature Center. **Location:** 2200 3rd Street, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time:** 7:00 PM. **Program:** Larry Snyder will be giving a program on our work with the Texas Quail Index.

SEPTEMBER 6: Sikes Lake Cleanup **Location:** Sikes Lake at MSU **Time:** 9:00 AM. **VOLUNTEER EVENT**

SEPTEMBER 9, 11, 16, 18: After school Fishing **Location:** Southwest Parkway Pond **Time:** 4:30 - 6:00 PM. **VOLUNTEER EVENT**

OCTOBER 2: Jeff Corwin, wildlife biologist **Location:** Akin Auditorium at MSU **Time:** 7:00 PM. **ADVANCED TRAINING**

OCTOBER 7: Chapter Meeting. All members are encouraged to present info on wild animals and share with the chapter. (similar to the plant discussion we had earlier in the year).

OCTOBER 12: Big Sit **Location:** behind Wild Bird Rescue **Time:** Dawn to 10:00 AM. **VOLUNTEER EVENT**

OCTOBER 24/25: Owl-o-ween **Location:** Wild Bird Rescue **Time:** Dark **Volunteers needed at the kid's tables to talk about birds and help with kid's crafts.** **VOLUNTEER EVENT**

DECEMBER 20: Christmas Bird Count sponsored by the Audubon Society. **Location:** TBA **Time:** Dawn to Dusk **Volunteers will join one of three teams to count bird species.** **VOLUNTEER EVENT**

Advanced Training Opportunities

Earth, Wind and Fire Summit

The Earth, Wind & Fire Energy Summit being presented by the Dallas Sierra Club **has been approved for advance training for Rolling Plains Chapter members.** It looks like an interesting conference. Other chapters are giving a 9 hour maximum for attendance. The deadline for the reduced pre-registration is quickly approaching and they also have a couple hotel deals. You can find those by clicking on the link in this e-mail. —Larry

Earth, Wind & Fire Energy Summit by Dallas Sierra Club (AT) From Saturday, October 04 2014 To Sunday, October 05 2014

The Dallas Sierra Club is coordinating a 2-day energy conference on Sat/Sun. October 4-5 called the Earth, Wind & Fire Energy Summit that will be held at the Addison Conference Centre. It will cover the current status and future projections for energy, including wind, solar, geothermal, waste to energy, natural gas, coal, and oil/dilbit. A fracking researcher will present on the relationship between deep injection disposal wells and earthquakes and there will be workshops on Barnett Shale air quality and groundwater contamination that particularly impact this area. You can see the full information at <http://www.earthwindfiresummit.org/>

The registration fee is \$55 prior to Sept. 2, \$75 afterward. This includes two hot buffet lunches, which makes it a pretty good deal! Some scholarships are available to help those who might not be able to attend otherwise. There are special hotel rates for out-of-town guests as well.

Artist-Lecture Series MSU Akin Auditorium

JEFF CORWIN

7 P.M. •
OCTOBER 2, 2014

Massachusetts native Jeff Corwin is known as a host and producer on educational and entertaining nature shows, including *The Jeff Corwin Experience* airing on Animal Planet. He has two bachelor degrees in biology and anthropology, a master's in wildlife and fishery conservation, and certification as an Advanced Field Medical Specialist by the U.S. Army Academy of Health Sciences. As a board member of Defenders of Wildlife and an active conservationist, Corwin lectures on wildlife, ecology, and conservation across the United States.



TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

QUAIL APPRECIATION DAY

SEPTEMBER 16, 2014

Archer County Agrilife Extension office
512 W Cottonwood Archer City Tx 76351

RSVP Requested
Pre-Registration fee \$10 By September 9
Late Registration fee \$20 after September 10

Key Note Speaker
Date Rotins, Ph.D., Professor and Extension Wildlife Specialist Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service

Attendees will receive 3 pesticides Applicators CEU's

Getting to know your Quail
Research Updates
Plant ID and Evaluating Quail Habitat
Quail Predators

Topics to include:
FAQ's About Quail
Other Quail Opportunities
Quail Nest
Hands on Quail Management

Agenda
8:30 Registration
9:00 Classroom Sessions
12:00 Noon Lunch Provided
1:15 Field Tours
4:30 Adjourn

For More Information and to RSVP Contact Justin Gilliam at 940-574-4914 or Email J-Gilliam@tamu.edu

Educational programs of the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

Pollinator Workshop

Chapter member Penny Miller will be presenting a Pollinator Workshop at River Bend Nature Center on September 23rd. **This workshop has been approved for advance training** and all chapter members are encouraged to attend. If you have any questions you can contact Penny at green.wichitafalls@gmail.com or talk to her at the meeting next Tuesday, September 2nd. (cool how I snuck in that meeting reminder isn't it?)

Larry



POLLINATOR WORKSHOP

6:00 PM – 8:30 PM

SEPTEMBER 23, 2014

We Can All Do Our Part to Save the Pollinators

Pollinators are in trouble, which means we're in trouble. These animals are responsible for pollinating over 85% of all flowering plants and of more direct interest to us, they are responsible for pollinating some 2/3 of the world's crops.

But there are ways to help.

Living Green in Wichita Falls

River Bend Nature
Center
2200 Third St,
Wichita Falls, TX
940-767-0843

Why Are
Pollinators
Important?

Why Are
Pollinators in
Trouble?

What Can YOU
Do?

Practical Tips for
Your Yard!

LIVING GREEN IN
WICHITA FALLS
<http://greenwichitafalls.blogspot.com>

Study of the Black-Tailed Prairie Dog at Lake Arrowhead State Park

by Jessica Healy, Ph.D

Assistant Professor of Biology at Austin College, Sherman, TX

Many species of ground squirrel (e.g., prairie dogs, 13-lined ground squirrels, etc.) hibernate during the winter. During hibernation, animals stop eating (after becoming obese) and drop their body temperatures to the temperature of the ground surrounding them.

Prairie dogs are called facultative hibernators because they only hibernate if they have to (e.g., if it is an extremely cold winter or if food is scarce).

We are interested in studying how hibernators control this yearly cycle of obesity and anorexia. In order to the physiology of these ground squirrels, we first have to trap them.



1. First we live trap the Prairie Dog using Taomahawk live traps baited with rolled oats, carrots, and sunflower seeds—because there is so much food at the park, the animals are more interested in playing with the traps than stealing food than getting in the trap.



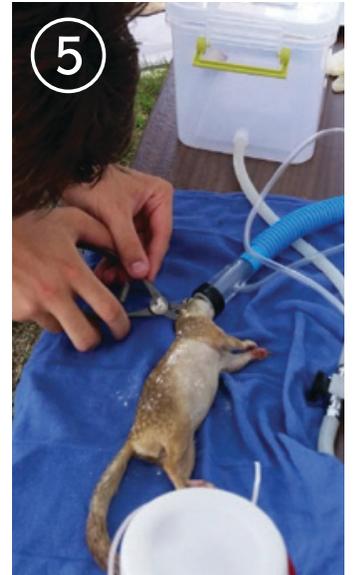
2. Once we trap an animal, we immediately take it back to the tent and get it ready for surgery.



3. We tip the animal into a plastic induction box that we then fill with an inhaled anesthesia gas (isoflurane) and wait until the animal falls asleep.



4. Once the animal is unconscious, we place him or her on a surgical towel and fit the nose in a nose cone with more isoflurane flowing through to keep them out.



5. The animal is then treated with flea powder and given a unique metal eartag with a small piece of color pipe cleaner stuck through to help identify the animal from a distance.



6. We measure the animal...

7. ...and shave a small patch on the inside of the hind leg and sterilize the skin with antiseptic soap and alcohol.



8. When the animal is all prepared, the surgeon (in sterile gloves, cap, gown, and mask) takes a blood sample from the femoral vein on the hind leg. The surgeon then uses the sterile implements in the metal box to take small biopsy samples of muscle and fat from the hind leg.



9. Finally, the small incision is sutured shut (with absorbable sutures), and the incision coated with antiseptic/analgesic cream to prevent infection.



10. Here is a post-surgery close-up of a large male (CYL066) with scars all over his face. We observed this male scent marking (urinating and dragging his sent glands) on the ground around his home territory—he clearly has been in lots of fights over females.

12. Here is the same male a couple of hours later, back to foraging and scent marking in his original territory. You can just see the little green tag on his right ear.



11. This is the same animal (CYL066) recovering from anesthesia in his trap—we put food (carrots, apples, flowers) into the trap so that he can eat while he is recovering. It usually takes 3 minutes for the animal to wake up, and we watch for another 30 minutes to make sure that the animal has recovered fully before we release him or her at the original trap site.



13. We take all the samples (blood, muscle, and fat) back to the lab in Sherman, and run tests for the hormones ghrelin and leptin (which are involved in food intake and testosterone and estrogen (sex hormones that also help control food intake)). The point of the study is to see how these hibernating ground squirrels are controlling their energy balance, since all animals in the wild are constantly trying to determine how much energy to put into reproduction in any year. If there is little food in the environment, animals are unlikely to breed that year.

Chapter Activities for August

Texas Quail Index Plant ID Study



Top: Lynn & Laura identifying plants. **Above:** A determined Jane McGough and Lynn Seman wrestle a clump of Witch Grass out of the ground on a recent plant collecting field trip. Jane's team is preparing a plant identification book for the Texas Quail Index project.

Rolling Plains Chapter at DeerFest



Above: At Deer Fest, Michelle and Cynthia talk about Bobwhite and the quail study our chapter is involved with. **Below:** June McKee introduces Rusty the screech-owl to visitors at DeerFest



Storks might be graceful birds, but their preferred method for cooling off is anything but. Several species of storks, as well as vultures, will defecate on their legs to cool



down. Since bird poop is mostly liquid, it works the same way that sweating does, through evaporative cooling. As the poop dries on the birds' legs, heat is carried away, bringing down their body temperature.



Texas blind snakes have been seen working with elf owls . . . but not by choice. A mother owl snatches up a snake after a rain and deposits it

into a nest of owlets. The snake eats parasites that might be harmful to baby birds.

No, it isn't a lake of Pepto-Bismol but Lake Hillier in Australia. It is one of the world's so-called "pink lakes". They are produced by warm waters and high concentration of salt, which



combine to cause a large quantity of algae in certain bodies of water to generate the red pigment beta-carotene.

Invasive Spotlight: Tawny Crazy Ant (*Nylanderia fulva*)

Tawny crazy ant was first found in Houston (Harris County) in 2002 and has since spread to many counties in eastern Texas.

Tawny crazy ants could be suspected if you detect many uniformly sized, 1/8 inch long ants with reddish-brown coloration in your landscapes, including foraging indoors from outdoor nests. The ants form loose foraging trails and also forage randomly, which earns them the title as "crazy".

The ants form colonies under objects in the outdoor landscape, including rocks, timbers and debris



trait from other ants is that they do not build centralized mounds and do not emerge from nests through central openings.

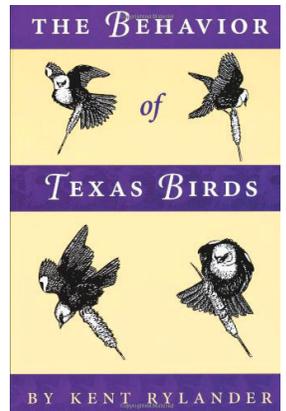
The ants threaten wildlife, such as birds by covering the ground and trees and will cause wildlife to move out of the area.

piles, among other things. A good distinguishing nest

RESOURCE CORNER

The Behavior of Texas Birds
by Kent Rylander
Paperback: 443 pages
Publisher: University of Texas Press
ISBN-10: 0292771207
Price:\$36.00

Whether it's the sudden, plunging dives of Brown Pelicans, the singing and aerial displays of Northern Mockingbirds, or the communal nesting of Purple Mar-



tins, innate and learned behaviors are some of the most fascinating things to observe in Texas birds. Even casual birdwatchers eventually ask, "why do they do that?" while serious birders and ornithologists seek to understand all the behaviors involved in feeding, flying, mating, and rearing young. But until now, it has been hard to find this information in one handy source.

In this comprehensive, yet easy-to-use book, Kent Rylander distills data from many sources to provide an authoritative guide to the behavior of Texas birds. He begins by explaining the principles of animal behavior and illustrating how they can be applied to interpreting bird behaviors in the field. The majority of the book is devoted to accounts of more than 400 species of birds that are most likely to be encountered by Texas birdwatchers. Each account describes such behaviors as feeding, courtship, parenting, and other behaviors that are significant for that species. References to interesting and important articles from scientific journals are incorporated in the species accounts where appropriate, and line drawings illustrate some of the behaviors described.

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